

Commander receives highest enlisted honor

HICKAM AIR FORCE BASE, Hawaii (PACAFNS) – The Pacific Air Forces enlisted force nominated their commander for the highest honor they can bestow today – induction into the Order of the Sword.

Gen. Patrick Gamble will be the fifth Pacific Air Forces commander and 16th recipient to be inducted into the Order of the Sword since the command initiated the tradition in 1974.

Chief Master Sgt. Ron Crowl, PACAF's command chief, presented the general with official notification of the Order of the Sword induction in a ceremony held in the Courtyard of Heroes, Headquarters Pacific Air Forces, Hawaii, Tuesday.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think this honor would come to me," said Gamble. "I am humbled that all of you would nominate me for an award of this stature – I accept and appreciate this from the depths of my heart."

The general's nomination was based on his dedication, leadership, and contributions to the enlisted corps, according to the chief. He has been responsive to the needs of enlisted members and their families at all levels, on and off duty. Whether supporting housing, dormitories, health

care, or dependent and enlisted education, General Gamble has been in the forefront to improve the quality-of-life initiatives throughout his command.

Induction into the Order of the Sword is an honor reserved for people who have given outstanding leadership and support to the enlisted corps. The inductee is honored as a leader among leaders and airmen among airmen.

The Order of the Sword is an ancient ceremony rich in tradition. It is conducted by noncommissioned officers to honor their greatest officers and civilian equivalents, who have made significant contributions to the enlisted corps. The sword, a symbol of truth, justice, and power rightfully used, serves as a token for all to see and know that here was a leader among leaders.

The ceremony is set for 6 p.m. April 6, at Hickam's Tradewinds NCO club. The formal event is for active duty and retired enlisted members only, and the attire for the evening is mess dress or semi-formal uniform.

Tickets are available through command chief master sergeants at all PACAF bases. More information on tickets is available by calling Crowl at DSN 449-4511 or Chief Master Sgt. Jeff Ledoux at DSN 449-0476.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Chris Haug, PACAF/PA

Senior Airman Kari Martin, executive information management specialist, Chief Master Sgt. Ron Crowl, Pacific Air Force command chief, Ailese Gamble, Gen. Patrick Gamble, PACAF commander in chief, and Airman First Class Kamuela Alesna, Hickam Air Force Base honor guard member, review the Order of the Sword invitation presented to Gamble Tuesday in the Courtyard of Heroes at Headquarters PACAF.

Army News

Kosovo soldiers honor memory of murder victim, comfort family

CAMP BONDSTEEL, Kosovo (Army News Service) – Task Force Falcon soldiers are teaming up with international relief organizations to help the family of an 11-year-old Kosovo girl raped and killed last year.

Merita Shabiju was killed last January by Army Staff Sgt. Frank Ronghi, who pleaded guilty to the murder and is now serving a life sentence at the U.S. Army Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

Task Force Falcon soldiers are now raising funds to build a memorial for the girl. Her family welcomes the effort, and Merita's father said he harbors no ill will toward U.S. troops in general.

"My daughter was killed by one individual soldier, not the entire Army," Shabiju said.

The Merita Shabiju Headstone Project was put together by Lt. Col. Gary Morsch, family practitioner, Task Force MedFalcon and founder of the Heart-to-Heart Organization.

"I visited the family and discovered that the 11-year-old girl was buried in a grave marked by two wooden posts and a cup used to bathe her prior to burial, a Muslim tradition," Morsch said. "It was then I decided to create the Merita Shabiju Headstone Project to place a monument at the grave site."

Civil Affairs approached Morsch and asked if there was anything that the Heart-to-Heart Organization could do to aid the Shabiju family, said Lt. Col. Allison Clark III, deputy commander, Task Force MedFalcon and project treasurer. The commander went to Task Force MedFalcon with the suggestion and we got involved.

"What we are trying to do is give the family a little help by building a wonderful memorial that Merita deserves," said Morsch. "I hope this will bring a sense of closure to the family, the Army and the community."

Col. Herman Blanton, commander of TFMedFalcon, contacted Task Force Falcon commander Brig. Gen. Kenneth

Quinlan about the project and he was very enthusiastic, Clark said. The commander wanted to open it to the entire task force.

The staff judge advocate reviewed papers concerning the project to ensure there were no violations of any joint ethic regulations or conflict of interest between the Army versus private activities, Clark said.

There is no use of government funds for this project, according to Clark. This is essentially a private activity. The whole project is based on private contributions and resources with the support and endorsement of Quinlan, Clark said.

All money received is deposited in a bank in Gijilan/Gnjilane, he added.

"The price of the headstone is 4,000 DM," Clark said. "So far, 560 DM has been put down on the monument deposit. Since the paying the deposit, I have received an additional \$100."

The memorial is something the Shabiju family could not afford on their own, officials said. The primary source of income for

the family comes from firewood, harvesting honey and mushroom farming.

The Shabiju family lives in a two-bedroom house in the mountains outside of Viti/Vitina.

The father aspires to one day move his family to the village of Viti/Vitina. Currently, the Shabiju children are unable to attend school because they live so far away from the village.

Although it has been one year since the death of Merita, her parents keep her memory alive.

"Merita liked her favorite red jacket, sweaters with plenty of colors, jeans, small chocolate bars and nuts," Mrs. Shabiju said. "We still have a piece of the nut she was eating the day she left us."

Merita's blue book bag still hangs by a nail in the corner of the family's living room. No one has touched it since the last time she hung it there. But Marita's father said he has no malice toward U.S. soldiers.

"Every time soldiers visit, it is more like a family visit and not a visit by strangers."

Army
surgeon
general
disspells
rumors about
depleted
uranium,
leukemia link

WASHINGTON (Army News Service) – Depleted uranium could not have caused leukemia in allied troops who served in Kosovo, according to a U.S. Army medical expert.

Col. Eric Daxon, the DU consultant to the Army surgeon general, was in Europe last week to convince NATO officials that there's no link between depleted uranium munitions and leukemia.

Daxon's briefing was given as Italy investigated claims that six of its peacekeepers died and 21 others became ill due to DU exposure in the Balkans. The European Union has also begun an investigation, according to reports. Some NATO nations have been considering a moratorium on depleted uranium munitions as

well.

Daxon briefed the military medical chiefs from each of the NATO nations. He told them there's absolutely no evidence that dust from expended DU munitions causes cancer or any other health problems. He said 35 scientific studies back that up.

Daxon said the incidence of leukemia among Italian soldiers who served in the Balkans is no higher than the general population.

He also said leukemia has a two-year latent period. He explained that it takes two years for leukemia to develop after someone is exposed to the radiation of an atomic blast, and four to six years for the illness to peak.

It's been less than two years since the

Kosovo air campaign. What's more, DU is actually 40 percent less radioactive than uranium found in the natural environment, he said.

"If you read the (Iraqi) report, it's just not scientifically valid," Daxon said. But the Iraqi report has been cited by some to try and link DU ammunitions used in Kosovo to leukemia in allied soldiers there, Daxon said.

Daxon said there's no reason to be afraid of depleted uranium – unless you're the enemy.

"A lot of this misinformation ... is the stringing together of true statements," Daxon said. "These misperceptions are actually hurting our soldiers and families." (Some information taken from earlier reports by Army Sgt. Jack Siemienieck and Linda Kozaryn.)